A DESCRIPTION OF *ALNWICK CASTLE*, AND WARKWORTH HERMITAGE.

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OF

ALNWICK CASTLE,

NORTHUMBERLAND.

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ALNWICK,
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DESCRIPTION

OF

ALNWICK CASTLE,

ALNWICK CASTLE, one of the principal seats of the great family of Percy, earls of Northumberland, is situated on the south side of the river Alne, on an elevation that gives great dignity to its appearance, and in ancient times rendered it a most impregnable fortress. It is believed to have been founded in the time of the Romans, altho' no part of the original structure is now remaining. But when part of the Dungeon or Castle-Keep was taken down to be repaired some years ago, under the present walls were dis-

covered the foundations of other buildings, which lay in a different direction from the present, and some of the stones appeared to have Roman mouldings.

The Dungeon or Keep of the present castle, is believed to have been founded in the Saxton times. The zig-zag fretwork round the arch that leads into the Inner Court, is evidently of Saxton architecture; and yet this was probably not the most ancient entrance; for under the Flag-Tower (before that part was taken down and rebuilt by the present duke's father) was the appearance of a Gate-Way that has been walled up, directly fronting the present Outward Gate into the town.

This Castle appears to have been a place of great strength immediately after the Norman conquest; for in the reign of King William Rufus, it underwent a remarkable siege from Mal-

colm III. King of Scotland, who lost his life before it, as did also Prince Edward his eldest son. The most authentic account of this event seems to be that given in the ancient Chronicle of Alnwick Abbey; of which a copy is preserved in the british Museum* This informs us that the castle, altho' too strong to be taken by assault, being cut off from all hopes of succour, was on the point of surrendering, when one of the garrison undertook its rescue by the following stratagem: He rode forth completely armed, with the keys of the castle tied to the end of his spear, and presented himself in a suppliant manner before the king's pavilion, as being come to surrender up the possession. Malcolm too hastily came forth to receive him, and was sudenly pierced with a mortal wound.

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* *Harl. MSS. No.* 692, (12.) *fo.* 155.

The assailant escaped by the fleetness of his horse through the river, which which was then swoln with rains. The Chronicle adds that his name was Hammond*, and that the place of his passage was long after him named Hammond's Ford, probably where the bridge was afterwards built. Prince

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* *Nothing can be more futile and erroneous, than the story told by Boetius and copied by other Scotish writers, that this soldier received the name of* Piercy *from* piercing *the king's* eye *with his spear, and was ancestor of the* Percies, *earls of Northumberland; whereas* William de Percy, *the ancestor of this family, came over from Normandy at the conquest, his name being inserted in the Roll preserved at Battle Abbey, and it continually occurs in doomesday Book, which is well known to have been drawn in the reign of King William I. Indeed he received his name from his domain of* Percy *in Lower Normandy, near St. Lo; nor had his decendants any connections with Northumberland, till the reign of Edward I. as will be seen below*

Edward, Malcolm's eldest son, too incautiously advancing to revenge his father, received a mortal wound of which he died 3 days after. The spot where Malcolm was slain, was distinguished by a cross, which was in 1774 restored by the late Duchess, who was immediately descended from this unfortunate king, by his daughter Queen Maud, wife of King Henry the I. of England; whose lineal descendants, were ,1. The Lady Mary Plantagenet, (daughter of Henry earl of Lancaster, grandson of King Henry III.) married to Henry Percy the third Lord of Alnwick; 2. The lady Elizabeth Mortimor (grand daughter of Lionel Duke of Clarence, son of King Edward III.) wife of Hotspur; and, 3. The lady Eleanor Neville (grand daughter of John of Gaunt) wife of the second earl of Northumberland,

In the following century, another king of Scotland was taken prisoner besieging this castle. This was William the III, commonly called the Lion; who having formed a blockade for some days, was surprized by a party of English, that had marched in the night to its relief, and coming suddenly on the king as he was reconnoitring the works at some distance from his camp, took him prisoner early in the morning of July 12, 1174. The captive monarch was sent first to Richmond, and afterwards into Normandy to King Henry II. A tradition has been preserved that the king was taken not more than a bow-shot from the castle, at a place formerly called Rotten-row, not far from the entrance on the Ride into Hulne Park.

To give compleat annals of all the events that happened at or near this Castle, would constitute too large a

part of the Border History; and therefore it will be sufficient only to mention at present, a remarkable retreat that was made from this castle, at the conclusion of the civil wars of York and Lancaster.

Margaret of Anjou had introduced into this castle a garrison of 300 Frenchmen. After the decisive battle of Towton, when the victorious Yorkists proceeded to take possession of all the castles in the North; Margaret, who was anxious to preserve this garrison, applied to George Douglas, earl of Angus, who very gallantly undertook to bring them away. He accordingly advanced with 10,000 horsemen; and making show, as if he meant to charge the English army, which had investsd the Castle, while the latter formed themselves in line of battle, he brought up a party of his stoutest horses to the postern-gate, to whom

the garrison made a sally, and every soldier mounting behind a trooper, (or as others say, on a number of spare horses brought purposely for them) the whole were securely conveyed into Scotland; the earl of Warwick, who commanded the English, being well satisfied to take possession of the deserted castle without bloodshed. It is believed that the garrison, before they retired, had endeavoured to destroy all the arms and ammunition which they could not carry off. Accordingly a few years ago, on opening the principle Well in the Inner Ward, which had been long filled up, the workmen found in it a great number of cannon balls, of a very large size, such as were chiefly used after the first invention of gunpowder, and which, together with some other things of that kind, had probably been thrown into the Well by this

garrison. This retreat was made in January, 1464.

To remount back to the history of the Proprietors of Alnwick Castle: before the Norman conquest, this Castle, together with the barony of Alnwick, and all its dependencies had belonged to a great baron, named Gilbert Tyson, who was slain fighting along with Harold. His son William had an only daughter, whom the Conqueror gave in marriage to one of his Norman chieftains, named Ivo de Vescy, together with all the inheritance of her houses. From that period the castle and barony of Alnwick continued in the possession of the lords de Vescy, down to to the time of King Edward I. In the 25th year of whose reign anno Domini 1297, died lord William de Vescy, the last baron of this family; who having no legitimate issue, did, by the king's licence, infeoff Anthony Bec, bishop of

Durham, and titular patriarch of Jerusalem, in the castle and barony of Alnwick. At the same time William gave to a natural son of his named also William de Vescy, a large estate in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire; which he settled absolutely on him and his heirs for ever.

This appointment, as also the very words of the deed of infeoffment, (still extant*) in which the conveyance is to the bishop absolute and unconditional, confute a report too hastily taken up by some historians, that this castle

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* *In the new edition of Collin's Peerage, 1779 vol. II. page 489, the lord William de Vecy's own Deed is printed at length: By which he gives to his natural son all his Manors of Malton, Langton, Wyntryngham and Brumpton, in Com. Ebor and Catthorp in Com. Lincoln, &c. and the Manors of Alnwick and Tughall to the Bishop and his heirs for ever. See also Dugdale's Bar. I. p. 95, &c.*

and barony were only given to the bishop in trust for William the bastard above mentioned, and that he was guilty of a violation of this trust in disposing of them otherwise.

In the bishop's possession the Castle and Barony of Alnwick continued twelve years, and were then by him granted and sold to the lord Henry de Percy, one of the greatest barons in the North, who had distinguished himself very much in the wars of Scotland, and whose family had enjoyed large possessions in Yorkshire from the time of the conquest. The grant was afterwards confirmed by the king at Sheene, 23d Jan. 1310, (anno 3. R. Ed, II.) to Henry de Percy and his heirs; who to remove every pretence of complaints obtained a release of all right and title to the inhertance from the heir at law, Sir Gilbert de Aton, knight, who was the nearest legitimate

relation to the lord William de Vescy above-mentioned.

From that period Alnwick Castle became the great baronial seat in the North, of the lords de Percy, and of their sucessors the earls of Northumberland: by whom it was transmitted down in lineal sucession to their illustrous representatives, the Duke and Duchess of Northumberland.

Immediately on its first acquisition, the lord Henry de Percy began to repair this Castle; and he and his sucessors, afterwards earls of Northumberland, perfected and compleated both this citadel and its outworks.

The two great octagon Towers which were superaded to the old Saxon Gateway afore-mentioned, and constitute the entrance into the Inner-Ward, where erected about the year 1350, by the second lord Percy of Alnwick, son to the former; who in 1327 had been

appointed one of the 12 Barons, to whom the government of England was assigned during the minority of King Edward III.

The date of the erection of these two Towers is ascertained very exactly by a series of Escutcheons sculptured upon them, which sufficiently supply the place of an inscription; and it is very remarkable, that altho' these towers have now stood upwards of 400 years, they have never received or wanted the least repair.

The *Escutcheons* are arranged in the following order:

I. A *plain* shield with a bend: supposed to be the original arms of *Tyson* the proprietor of this castle in the Saxon times.

II. The shield of *Vescy*, lord of Alnwick, after the conquest, whose arms were *Or a cross table.*

III. Of *Clifford.* Idone, daughter of Robert lord Clifford, was wife of Henry, 2 Lord Percy, of Alnwick, who built these towers. In colours it would be *Chequered, or and azure, a fess gules.*

IV. Of *Percy,* the proprietor and builder of the towers, viz. *Or a lion rampant azure.*

V. Of *Bohun.* William de Bohun earl of Northampton, was in 1350 made Lord Warden of the Marches, and so continued for two years after: viz. *Azure, a bend argent charged with three mullets sable, between two cotices and six lions rampant or.*

VI. Of *Plantagenet.* Mary daughter of Henry Plantagenet, Earl of Lancaster, and grandson of King Henry III. was wife of Henry, 3d lord Percy of Alnwick, son to the founder of these towers: viz. *Gules, 3 lions rampant or, charged with a label of 5 points.*

In the Center are the arms of the sovereign King Edward III. viz. France and England quarterly: France being then *Semee de fleurs de lis.*

VII. Of *Warren.* Eleanor, daughter of John earl ot Warren and Surrey, was wife of Henry, Lord Percy, the founder's grand-father: viz. *Chequered, or and azure.*

VIII. Of *Arundel.* Eleanor, daughter of John, earl of Arundel, was the founder's mother; wife of Henry Percy, 1st Lord of Alnwick; viz, *Gules, a lion rampant or.*

IX. Of *Umfreville.* Margaret Percy, one of the founder's daughters, was then married to Robert, son and heir of Gilbert de Umfreville, earl of Angus: viz. *Azure, a cinque-soil or, between 6 croslets argent.*

X. Of *Percy* again. Isabel Percy, another of the daughters was then un-

married. She was afterwards wife of William de Aton.

XI. Of *Neville.* Maud Percy, the founder's eldest daughter, was wife of John lord Neville of Raby, viz. *Gules, a saltire argent.*

XII. Of *Fitz-Walter.* Eleanor Percy, his second daughter, was married to John lord Fitz-Walter: viz. *Or, a fess between 2 chevrons gules.*

It deserves remark, that the present Duke of Northumberland is by his grandmother, daughter of Marmaduke lord Langdale, lineally descended from the two ladies last mentioned, and thro' them from the ancient lords *de Percy.*

Alnwick Castle contains about five acres of ground within its Outer Walls, which are flanked with sixteen Towers and Turrets, that now afford a compleat set of offices to the castle, and retain many of them their original names

as well as their ancient use and destination.

These are,

I. The *Great* or *Outward Gate* entrance, anciently called the Utter Ward.

II. The Garner or Avener's Tower: behind which are the Stables, Coach-houses, &c. in all respects suitable to the magnitude and dignity of this great castle.

III. The Water tower; containing the Cistern or Reservoir that supplies the castle and offices with water. Adjoining to this is the Laundry, &c.

IV. The Caterer's Tower; adjoin-to which are the Kitchens, and all conveniences of that sort.

Behind the adjacent walls are concealed a compleat set of Offices and Apartments for most of the principal Officers and Attendants in the castle.

—Together with a large Hall or Dining-Room, to entertain the tenants at the Audits; with an office for the Auditors, House-keeper's Room; and underneath these, a Servant's-Hall, with all other suitable conveniences.

V. The Middle Ward.

VI. The Auditor's Tower.

VII. The Guard House.

VIII. The East Garret.

IX. The Record's Tower; of which the lower story contains the Evidence-Room, or great Repository of the Archives of the Barony: over it is a Circular Apartment designed and executed with great taste and beauty for a Banquetting Room, being 29 feet diameter and 24 ft. 6 inches high.

X. Ravine Tower, or Hotspur's Chair. Between this and the Round Tower was formerly a large breach in the walls, which for time immemorial

had been called by the town's people, the Bloody Gap.

XI. The Constable's Tower; which remains chiefly in its ancient state, as a specimen how the castle itself was once fitted up.

XII. The Postern Tower, or Sally-Port. The upper Apartment now contains old armour, arms, &c. The lower story has a small furnace and elaboratory for chymical or other experiments.

XIII. The Armour's Tower.

XIV. The Falconer's Tower.

XV. The Abbot's Tower; so called either from its situation nearest to Alnwick Abbey, or from its containing an apartment for the Abbot of that monastry whenever he retired to the castle.

XVI. The West Garret.

The Castle properly consists of three Courts or Divisions; the entrance in-

to which was defended with three strong massy gates; called the Utter Ward, the Middle Ward, and the Inner Ward. Each of these Gates was in a high embattled Tower, furnished with a Portcullis, and the Outward Gate with a draw bridge also; they had each of them a Porter's Lodge, and a strong Prison, besides other necessary apartments for the Constable, Bailiff, and subordinate officers. Under each of the Prisons was a deep and dark Dungeon, into which the more refractory prisoners were let down with cords, and from which there was no exit but thro' the trap door in the floor above. That of the Inner Ward is still remaining in all its original horrors.

This castle, like many others in the North, was anciently ornamented with Figures of Warriors, distributed round the battlements, and therefore the present noble proprietor hath allowed them

and be continued, and hath supplied some that have been destroyed, but to show what they once were, and, that this is no innovation, he hath retained the ancient ones, tho' defaced, which were placed on the top of the Octagon Towers.

From length of time, and the shocks it had sustained in ancient wars, this castle was become quite a ruin, when by the death of Algernoon, duke of Somerset, it devolved, together with all the estates of this great barony, &c. to the Duke and Dutchess of Northumberland: who immediately set to repair the same, and with the most consummate taste and judgment restored and embellished it, as much as possible, in the true Gothic style; so that it may deservedly be considered as one of the noblest and most magnificent models of a great Baronial Castle.

Nothing can be more striking than

the effect at first entrance within the walls from the town, when thro' a dark gloomy Gateway of considerable length and depth, the eye suddenly emerges into one of the most splendid scenes that can be imagined; and is presented at once with the great body of the Inner Castle, surrounded with fair semicircular Towers, finely swelling to the eye, and gaily adorned with pinnacles, figures, battlements, &c.

The impression is still further strengthened by the successive entrance into the Second and Third Courts, thro' great massy Towers, till the stranger is landed in the Inner Court, in the very centre of this great citadel.

Here he enters to a most beautiful Stair Case, of a very singular yet pleasing form, expanding like a fan; the cornice of the cieling is enriched with a series of 120 escutcheons displaying the

principal quartering, and intermarriages of the Percy family. The space occupied by this Staircase is 46 feet long, and 35 feet 4 inches wide, and 43 feet 2 inches high.

The first room that presents to the left, is the *Saloon*, which is a most beautiful apartment, designed in the best and most elegant stile of Gothic architecture, being 42 feet 8 inches long, 37 feet 2 inches wide, and 19 feet 10 inches high.

To this succeeds the *Drawing Room*, consisting of one large oval, with a semicircular projection, or bow-window, it is 46 feet 7 inches long, 35 feet 4 inches wide, and 22 feet high.

Hence the transition is very properly to the *Great Dining Room;* which was one of the first executed, and is of the purest Gothic, with niches, and other ornaments, that render it a very noble model of a great Baron's Hall.

In this room was an irregularity in the form which has been managed with great skill and judgment, and made productive of beauty and convenience. This was a large Bow Window, not in the centre, but towards the upper end, which now affords a a very agreeable Recess when the family dine alone, or for a Second Table at the great public dinners. This room is 53 feet 9 inches long, 20 feet 10 inches wide, (exclusive of the circular recess, which is 19 feet in diameter) and 26 feet 9 inches high.

From the Dining Room the stranger may either descend into the court, by a *Circular Stair Case*, or he is ushered into a very beautiful Gothic apartment over the Gateway, commonly used for a Breakfast or Supper Room: this is furnished with closets in the octagon towers, and is connected with other private apartments. It is 38 feet

4 inches long, 19 feet 10 inches wide, (exclusive of the recesses, which are 4 feet 7 inches) and 16 feet 1 inch high.

Hence the stranger is conducted into the *Library*, which is a very fine room, in the form of a parallellogram, properly fitted up for the books, and ornamented with stucco-work in a very rich Gothic style; being 64 feet long, 23 feet 1 inch wide, and 16 feet 1 inch high. This apartment leads to

The *Chapel;* which fills all the upper space of the Middle Ward. Here the highest display of Gothic ornaments in the greatest beauty has been very properly exhibited; and the several parts of the chapel have been designed after the most perfect models of Gothic excellence. The great East window is in the style of one of the finest in York Minster. The Ceiling is borrowed from that of King's col-

lege, in Cambridge; and the Mouldings and Stucco work are gilt and painted after the great church in Milan; but the Windows of Painted Glass are for lightness and elegance superior to any thing that has yet been attempted, and worthy of the present more improved state of the arts. Exclusive of a beautiful circular recess for the family, the chapel is 50 feet long, 21 feet 4 inches wide, and 22 feet high.

Returning from the Chapel through the Library, and passing by another great *Stair Case,* (that fills an oval space 22 feet 9 inches long, and 15 feet 3 inches wide) we enter a passage or Gallery which leads to two great *State Bed Chambers,* each 30 feet long, most nobly furnished, with double Dressing Rooms, Closets and other conveniences, all in the highest elegance and magnificence, but as confor-

mable as possible to the general style of the castle. From these Bed Chambers the Passage opens to the grand Stair Case, by which we first entered, and compleats a tour not easily to be paralleled.

FINIS.